

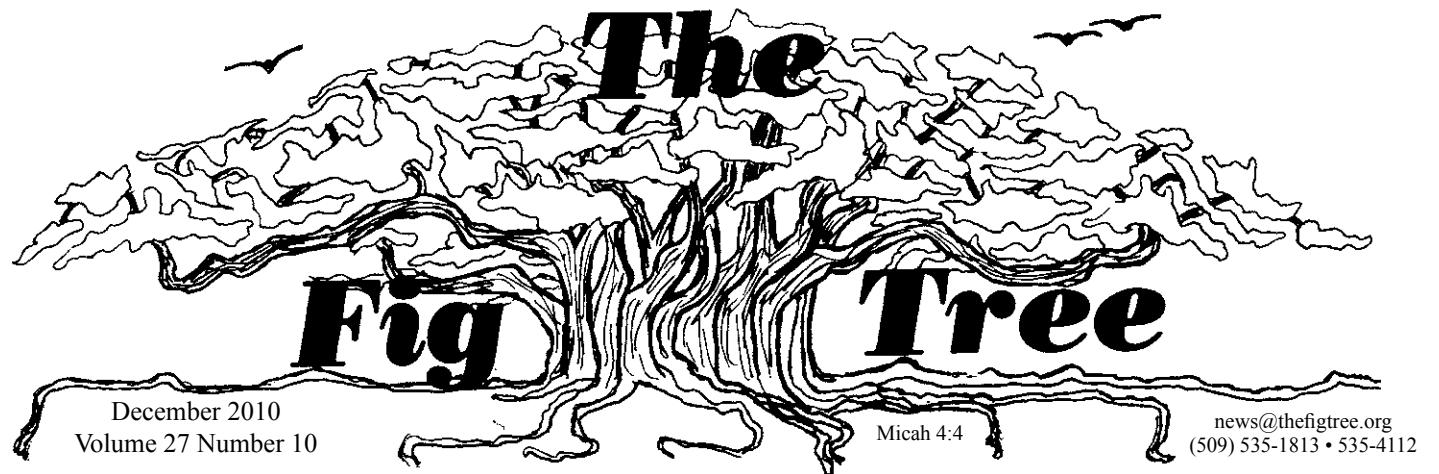
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Agencies remain committed - p. 4,5,8,11,12



Monthly newspaper and website covering faith in action throughout the Inland Northwest
online in color at www.thefigtree.org

Ministry balances with business

By Mary Stamp

Working at The Book Parlor “shapes and stretches” Casey Laughary’s faith as he interacts with people who are on the margins, homeless or struggling with addictions.

Part of the store’s mission is selling books, fair-trade gifts and local art, and part of its mission is to be present with people in the neighborhood who drop in for books, or for coffee and food at the adjacent Indaba Coffee shop.

Both business-ministries are on the store-front level of Walnut Corners, which houses 18 chronically mentally ill residents in low-income apartments. It’s across the street from Salem Lutheran Church, which first opened The Book Parlor in a house beside the church. Behind the church is another low-income apartment complex for 29 singles and families.

Other neighbors include county offices, attorneys and the low-income West Central neighborhood.

“I see how people who drop in keep hope and joy in the midst of their lives,” Casey said. “Rather than looking at wealthy people and thinking, ‘Woe is me,’ I realize that I am blessed. I am not trapped by the materialist culture that says I



Casey Laughary is surrounded by books, gifts and people at The Book Parlor.

need the latest and newest.”

Six years ago, he started working part time at The Book Parlor, when it was in the house. He lived in an upstairs apartment free. Eventually, his job grew to full-time manager.

The Book Parlor started in 2001 to provide theological resources and promote theological discussion. Now it is a full-service neighborhood bookstore, as well as a Christian bookstore, offering 10,000 books—5,000 on the shelves and 6,000 online.

It sells used fiction and nonfiction books for 50-cents and up, so it costs less for people in the neighborhood to buy a book there than to go by bus or car to the library.

Casey attended The Berkshire, Mass., Institute for Christian Studies, an Adventist Christian Bible college, the Christian Missionary Alliance School in Nyack, N.Y., and Whitworth University. He also spent a few years in Seattle before moving back to Spokane.

Having done retail work and loving to read, he said the job fits. Faith also motivates him. Casey, who is a member at his home church, Immanuel Baptist in the Shadle Park neighborhood, also

Continued on page 6

Senior meals four-year contract granted to Valley Meals on Wheels

Having opened its own kitchen two years ago, Valley Meals on Wheels bid for and received the four-year contract to provide Meals on Wheels and meals served at senior centers for Spokane County beginning in 2011.

Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington (ALTCEW) has granted the contract for providing Meals on Wheels, which has for 30 years gone to the Spokane Regional Health District (SRHD). ALTCEW allocates the funds from the Federal Older Citizens Services Act and the State Senior Citizens Services Act.

Nick Beamer, director of ALTCEW, said Governor Christine Gregoire recently told him to expect up to a 30 percent reduction in overall funding for the State Senior Citizens Services Act in 2011.

He said it’s the first time in five bidding cycles—20 years—that there has been a competing bid.

Pam Almeida, executive director of the 35-year-old Valley Meals on Wheels (MOW), said, “we faced cuts year after year and figured that, by removing a layer of management, there would be more funds for services, so we

decided to vie for the contract.”

Having its own 3,000-square-foot kitchen at 218 N. Crestline St. added to Valley MOW’s potential to streamline and save money, so “government and donor funds would go further,” she said.

The contract pays for only half of the program, so Pam, who has been there 12 years, appreciates that Spokane is generous and “will not tolerate seniors going hungry.”

With the \$608,815 it will receive each year for meals, and \$12,000 for transportation, Valley MOW will prepare from 650 to 700 hot meals a day—in contrast to 400 to 450 for its own clients—adding clients of Mid-City Concerns, which has had a contract with the SRHD Senior Nutrition Program, and other county outlets.

The chef makes meals from scratch, she said, adding that Valley MOW will hire more staff and seeks more volunteers in the kitchen to stretch the funds.

Hot meals are delivered Mondays through Fridays, and frozen meals on weekends.

Continued on page 4

UN Human Rights Day speaker focuses on Middle East conflict

Marianne Torres, a retired social worker, writer and peace activist, will speak on “Human Rights in Palestine and Israel through the Lens of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights” for Spokane’s Human Rights Day at 2 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 12, at All Saints Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce.

Sponsors of this celebration of the 62nd anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are the United Nations Association, Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane and Progressive Democrats of America.

Although she was once a “staunch Zionist” and an unquestioning supporter of Israel out of her concern about the human rights abuses Jews suffered in the Holocaust, Marianne has become an ardent supporter of human rights for Palestinians.

Her turnabout began when she met her husband, Michael Poulin. She thought he was anti-Semitic because of his criticism of Israeli policies that undermine basic human rights of Palestinians, such as their ability to work, shop, visit family and build homes. Then she learned he is Jewish.

In 1984, he invited her to a memorial for two villages massacred in Lebanon by the Lebanese Phalange Army supported by the Israeli army. That event led her begin going to a Palestinian solidarity group with her anti-Semitic antennae on high alert.

“I never heard hatred of Jews spoken in those meetings, only of their actions,” said Marianne, who had worked closely with Jews in the ACLU and NAACP. “Then I realized two-thirds of people in the Palestinian solidarity groups were Jewish. I realized the struggle was about oppression, not racism against Jews.”

This summer, in keeping her concerns about Palestinian freedom, equality and justice, and America’s role in the region, she went to Palestine for a first-hand experience of the situation.

Continued on page 3

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Around the World

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Christians and Muslims want crisis response

An international consultation on Muslim-Christian relations in November at Geneva called for forming "a joint working group that can be mobilized whenever a crisis threatens to arise in which Christians and Muslims find themselves in conflict."

Sixty Muslims and Christians participated in the consultation on "Transforming Communities: Christians and Muslims Building a Common Future" at the World Council of Churches offices.

Participants said: "Religion is often invoked in conflict creation, even when other factors—unfair resource allocation, oppression, occupation and injustice—are the real roots of conflict. We must find ways to disengage religion from such roles and reengage it for conflict resolution and compassionate justice." They also affirmed the need for "relevant, balanced education on the religion of 'the other' at all levels" of religious education.

They recommend that the WCC, World Islamic Call Society, the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute and the Consortium of a Common Word establish a joint project to promote sharing experiences and best practices "of living together constructively in plural societies"; building a "culture of dialogue and inter-religious cooperation," and working together on social and environmental issues.

Faith leaders fight poverty

Leaders of many national religious organizations gathered in November in the Russell Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., to update members of Congress and staff, Administration officials, and coalition partners about faith community efforts to reduce poverty by 50 percent over the next 10 years through an initiative entitled, "Fighting Poverty with Faith."

The nationwide effort co-chaired by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Catholic Charities USA and the National Council of Churches focuses attention on the causes of poverty, highlights strategies to reduce poverty, and aggressively seeks new economic opportunities for the nation's most vulnerable.

Now in its third year, Fighting Poverty with Faith includes 52 national faith-based organizations and mobilizes thousands of individuals across the country to take action to address poverty. For information, visit www.fightingpovertywithfaith.com

Churches urge Europe to take lead on climate justice

A consultation on Poverty, Wealth and Ecology in Europe organized by the Conference of European Churches and the World Council of Churches in cooperation with churches in Hungary last month adopted a "Budapest Call for Climate Justice."

About 80 representatives of churches and church-related agencies that are working on poverty reduction and development discussed links between the creation and accumulation of wealth, and ecological damage and poverty.

They said the methods of wealth creation and pursuit of unlimited wealth in rich industrialized countries of Europe often impoverish communities and harm creation as a whole: "Climate justice and therefore both social and ecological values should be a central goal of policy-making. In industrialized countries, economic growth should no longer be seen as an aim in itself."

They urge "the redistribution of wealth and sharing of technology between rich countries and poor countries affected by climate change" as "crucial elements of climate justice," along with "support for climate change mitigation and adaptation."

They call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions independent of other large economies and expect EU efforts to tackle poverty and social exclusion among marginalized migrant communities.

"Christians have an important message for today's world: we are all responsible to advocate and work for systems that eradicate poverty and must not let our lives be defined by systems of greed," said Rogate Mshana, director of the WCC program on Justice, Peace and Creation. "The churches in the different countries and regions can make this message heard in different places and can hold each other accountable."

REGIONAL ECUMENICAL & INTERFAITH NEWS

Legislative Conference looks beyond fear

"Beyond a Climate of Fear: Empowering the Community of Faith to Action" is the theme for the 2011 Eastern Washington Legislative Conference set for 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., Saturday, Jan. 22, at the Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th in Spokane.

Organized by the Lutheran Public Policy Office, the Washington Association of Churches, and The Fig Tree, the event will address the current political climate that promotes fear that divides to

increase citizen apathy.

There will also be speakers updating the faith community participants on issues before the state legislature. Other issues that will be explored include local to national to international dynamics related to immigration, the economy and jobs.

Worship will use resources from the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Alice Woldt, executive director of the Washington Association of

Churches (WAC), will present the 2010 Eastern Washington ecumenical-interfaith leadership award at the Spokane event to the Rev. Percy "Happy" Watkins, pastor of New Hope Baptist and human rights leader, who is committed to keeping Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "Dream" alive.

Three Western Washington leaders received awards at the Dec. 5 WAC Annual Dinner at University Christian in Seattle.

For information, call 535-4112.

Voicemail Choir sings stories of voiceless

"Trust in me! Trust!" begins the story song of two sisters about a lost job and a lost home. "I know it will be okay, we've got a place to stay, and the pain will go away when you believe!"

That song is one of many featuring experiences of families from homelessness to stability in the annual HeartSongs concert by The Voiceless Choir at 6:30 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 5, at the Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague.

Michelle Christie, one of the concert's organizers and a former homeless woman, recently described the weekly choir practices

that led up to the concert.

"Families come through Interfaith Hospitality and other social services," she said. "It's the one night during the week that's devoted to having fun together. Singing is such a therapeutic thing. When you combine that with the relief of telling your story, well the sky's the limit."

The Voiceless Choir receives food and other support from the Covenant Christian Church, a Disciples of Christ congregation at 5915 S. Regal. Other congregations and the House of Charity help to feed the families at their

weekly choir practices.

"Spending time together with other people who have gone through similar experiences, makes us feel more normal," said a participant. "I know I've made mistakes, but I've learned from them, and I dragged my kids through some terrible times. Now, I'm ready to leave that behind."

Proceeds will be shared by The Voiceless Choir, Interfaith Hospitality and Volunteer of America's Crosswalk teen shelter.

Preceding the concert there will be a silent auction at 5:30 p.m.

For information, call 448-1311.

Institute celebrates Human Rights Day

The Human Rights Education Institute (HREI) will celebrate the United Nations' Human Rights Day at an 8 a.m. breakfast, Friday, Dec. 10, at the institute at 414 1/2 Mullan in Coeur d'Alene.

Speakers for the program on "Why Are Human Rights Important to Me in North Idaho?" are Jobs Plus President Steve Grifffits, Coeur d'Alene Chamber of Commerce President and CEO

Todd Christensen, and representatives from the North Idaho AIDS Coalition, Hospice of North Idaho and the Human Rights Club of Coeur d'Alene High School.

Human Rights Day recognizes the United Nations' adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) Dec. 10, 1948. It establishes principles of the dignity and worth of every human being.

The institute, which opened on Dec. 10, 2005, was established to combat intolerance and racial prejudice in North Idaho, said Heather Keen, director of programs and community outreach for the HREI. The institute provides programs, exhibits and educational opportunities to address human rights issues.

For information, call 208-292-2359 or email info@hrei.org.

Tree of Sharing runs to Dec. 12

The Tree of Sharing, which is open through Dec. 12 at Riverpark Mall, NorthTown Mall and Spokane Valley Mall, has 7,000 tags with \$200,000 in gift requests to fill for people through 57 agencies.

The gift program has granted \$2 million in gifts since began in 1982 with volunteers at Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ and KREM2.

Volunteers staff trees decorated with tags. Shoppers pick tags and return gifts by Dec. 12.

For information, call 624-1366.

NW Harvest sees 35% rise in need

Northwest Harvest opened a food warehouse in Spokane Valley a year ago to improve efficiency of deliveries to Eastern Washington, rather than transporting food across the state each month to 13 programs in Spokane County, said Claire Acey, communication manager at the administrative offices in Seattle. The warehouse has a manager and a food procurement specialist.

Claire said Northwest Harvest,

which started in 1967 in Seattle, has seen need increase 35 percent statewide since the recession. Last year it distributed more than 24 million pounds of food to its network of 300 food banks, meal programs and elementary schools across the state. Fresh produce is more than 60 percent of what it provides.

For information, call 206-923-7426, email clairea@northwest-harvest.org.

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Sunday, Jan. 16

Speaker: Rev. Leslie Braxton, BA, MDiv, DMin
New Beginnings Christian Fellowship
5-7 p.m., Holy Temple Church of God in Christ - 806 W. Indiana

Unity March & Community Resource Fair Monday, Jan. 17

10 a.m., INB Performing Arts Center - 334 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
11 a.m.-2 p.m. - Community Resource Fair, Riverpark Square, 1st & 2nd Levels
Children's Learning Resource Fair at STA Plaza, 1st Level

For information, call 455-8722

Faith and Environment Network suggests simpler ways to celebrate

Given that the holidays generate about 25 percent more solid waste than other times of the year, the Faith and Environment Network of the Inland Northwest offered an opportunity in November for people to look at alternative gifts, wrappings and crafts.

Wanda Daehlin, a member of St. Mark's Lutheran who is active in the network, said, "Too often, we shop and shop, but we're not happy about how we celebrate Christmas. The best gift we can give anyone during the holidays or any time is to give ourselves."

Felicia Reilly, who helped coordinate the event, introduced several vendors who are marketing environmentally sustainable soap, candies, jams, snacks, merchandise and candles. She also introduced options for people to donate to the global relief and development work and to community ministries.

She also offered "Tips for a Sustainable Holiday Season."

- By planning ahead, people can decide what traditions are most important and how they want their holiday to be. When they decide on meals and events, they can list the tasks and make plans to shift from a "sometimes chaotic



Evita Krislock helps Madeleine Williams, Natalie Fisher and Natalia Maragraf with crafts.

season" and from impulse buying and overspending.

- Buying locally supports local businesses, especially those who support fair trade and make their own items. It also supports the community. "Shopping online is not necessarily greener because of the impact of shipping and packaging," Felicia said.
- Buying services, such as gift

certificates, supports local business without packaging.

- Making gifts, decorations, Christmas cards and treats can be fun for families.
- Shopping at local thrift stores saves money and recycles DVDs, appliances, sweaters and more.
- Exploring nature rather than spending time in shopping malls, gives a break from a hectic life.

"Sometimes the best way to celebrate is to go outside for a walk with our children and pick up pine cones and evergreen branches to decorate naturally," Felicia said.

- Donating to an organization in the name of a gift recipient is a way to transform lives.

- Instead of giving poinsettias, she suggests giving to Floresta, a Christian nonprofit that reverses deforestation and poverty.

- Most important is to have fun with family and friends.

"Remember your blessings and help bless those around you," Felicia said. "Don't worry if the house is messy, the food isn't perfect or gifts aren't big enough. We need to enjoy what we have and have hope for the coming year."

For information, email faithandenvironment@gmail.com or visit www.faithandenvironmentnetwork.org.

Nonviolence is way to work for human rights

Continued from page 1

Sponsored by Shalom Menonite United Church of Christ, Marianne, who came from California to Spokane in 2000 to be near grandchildren, joined a July 21 to Aug. 4 Christian Peacemaker delegation, to see for herself.

The team visited Palestinian and Israeli organizations involved in nonviolent resistance to Israel's military occupation. They visited refugee camps, stayed with Palestinian families and did mosque and school patrols to provide international protection for children and shepherds facing routine violence by some Israeli settlers.

They visited a Bedouin village in Israel two days before 1,500 Israeli police, soldiers and high-school students demolished it. These Bedouins are Israeli citizens. Some Israelis joined Palestinians to rebuild the village, which has been demolished and rebuilt six times since then.

After working 25 years for Pal-

estinian self-determination, she found the visit presented many surprises and "was an emotional roller-coaster, from sadness and despair to joy and serious reason to hope, and sometimes back again—often in the same day."

Marianne, who earned master's of social work from San Francisco State in 1989 and worked with homeless coalitions in Oakland and Marin, had wanted to go to Palestine for years. Her decision to go this year began in a store.

"I was wearing a 'Liberate Palestine' button. The clerk asked, 'Have you been there?' No, I could speak about conditions and historical background, but I had not been there. I looked at programs and chose the Christian Peacemaker program—even though I'm atheist—because it was action-oriented, 'getting in the way' and witnessing," she said.

The team's goals were to learn

about life under occupation, to be sure not to hate, to remain neutral and to be open to learn new things, not just confirm their opinions.

She found "nonviolence is a living breathing entity," connecting Christians, Muslims and Jews. "It's the only method that makes sense. It's more threatening than guns or stones, because it brings world attention and support to Palestinians whose human rights are violated."

With hundreds of Palestinian nonviolence leaders in Israeli prisons and Israeli nonviolence leaders ostracized by their families, international human rights workers, who watch, interfere, witness and return home to speak, play a key role, Marianne said.

As she continues her Palestinian solidarity at home, she is looking at the "Boycott, Divest and Sanction" movement.

For information, call 838-7870.



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Whitman County Council on Aging finds ways to keep programs going

The Whitman County Council on Aging expects to feel the anticipated \$5,000 reduction in state nutrition funds and knows it will be the first of more cuts to its Meals on Wheels programs in Colfax and Pullman, plus its six senior meal sites in Palouse, Colfax, Rosalia, Pullman, Tekoa and Oakesdale.

"We hope to minimize the impact of state cuts to make them seamless to seniors," said Scott Hallett, director of the program for 11 years since he retired from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administration of federal farm programs.

"Support has been good through the years. As costs go up, we have funded them through kind-hearted people. We will continue to try to raise more money," he said.

Along with several people who give monthly or quarterly donations, the Meals on Wheels (MOW) "March for Meals" raises about \$9,000 from sponsors the end of April.

MOW serves a hot meal to 15 to 30 people in Colfax and Pullman 365 days a year. The staff are Scott, and part-time clerical help and cooks.

During the year, about 150 volunteers keep Meals on Wheels, senior meal sites, food banks and commodity distributions going.

Churches and service groups schedule the year and recruit their members. Volunteers have background checks, he said. Some volunteers help one day, some three days and some for a week.

"Volunteers receive as much as the person given the meal," Scott said.

"We're the only reason some



Senior lunch served at a Colfax church.

Courtesy of Scott Hallett

people can stay in their homes and maintain their independence. Some can't stand long enough to prepare food," he said. "Nutrition is one of the primary factors in senior health."

Meal deliveries also bring daily contact. Volunteers may be the only people seniors see all day.

"I thought I'd do this work for just two or three years after I retired, but I've been here 11 years," said Scott, a member of St. Patrick's Catholic Church in Colfax, where he has lived 30 years. "My faith helps motivate me."

"It's not about spreading religion, but about people caring for people," he said. "Many of us can see down the road we may need such care for ourselves. Some are just one accident away from needing help."

Scott sees the impact of the economic downturn in the food banks, serving 680 to 730 families a month. In previous recent years, the average number of families served was in the low 600s.

He believes the state legislature

will protect the food banks as a safety net in these economic times when so many need help.

"Many work and just don't earn enough to make it," he said. "There's a big distance between those who have and those who don't have in Whitman County."

A third of those the food bank serves are seniors. Scott attributes that to social workers in the Council on Aging letting seniors know where they can find help.

"Most seniors resist looking for help and won't ask for it if they don't have to," he said. "Their ethic is to get by on their own."

Whitman County has a pilot commodity food subsidy program for seniors 60 or older with incomes less than \$1,174 a month.

"The average income of those on the program is \$748 a month," Scott said. "I don't know how they live on that, paying for food, gas, heat and housing."

The Council on Aging has food pantries in Colfax, Rosalia and Malden, and 12 surplus commodity distribution sites at city halls or

fire stations around the county, so no one has far to drive.

"It's more economical for us to take food out than for 600 families to drive to Colfax," he said.

Much of the operating funds for transportation to deliver the food comes from the Emergency Food Assistance Program of the State Department of Agriculture.

"Hunger is not a political Republican vs. Democrat issue. It's a people issue," Scott said. "The state legislature is concerned that people have enough food to eat."

Scott said the food supply comes from Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, individual donations, the USDA, Tom's Turkey Drive and the Walmart Superstore in Pullman.

In the year ending in June 2010, the food banks and commodity program distributed 239,000 pounds of food, 26 percent more than in 2009, he reported. In contrast, in 1999, they distributed

49,000 pounds of food.

Partnering with Tom's Turkey Drive in Spokane and FISH (Friends in Service to Humanity) in Colfax, they distributed 564 turkeys last year, for the first time in Whitman County. FISH also provides immediate response to emergency needs to help on days the food banks are not open.

For information, call 509-595-0956 or email coascott@qwestoffice.net.

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Valley Meals on Wheels will fill gaps

Continued from page 1

"The last few months, we have seen tremendous growth in need," Pam said. "A recent client survey found that for 40 percent of clients it's their only meal in a day, up from 33 percent in the past. In addition, 93 percent said the meal kept them in their home. Meals on Wheels is a less expensive way to care for people. One year of meals—\$1,000—costs less than one-fourth of nursing home costs for a month—\$4,000 or more."

Valley MOW recruits and coordinates about 250 volunteers and currently delivers 1,250 meals each week.

For the senior lunch program—officially called "senior congregate meals"—Valley MOW will have 11 sites under the 2011 contract. Mid-City Concerns will continue to make their own senior lunches, and Cheney Care Cen-

ter will continue to make senior lunches for Cheney residents.

Seniors must be 60 or older or disabled, homebound and having difficulty preparing their own meals to be eligible for home-delivered meals. To receive meals at a senior center, they must be 60 or older. The programs suggest a donation of \$3.50 for a meal.

Lynne Quimby, Spokane Regional Health District manager for the senior nutrition program, said that the contract goes up for bid every four years. Its Senior Nutrition Program has been providing meals through contracts with the providers, Valley MOW and Mid-City Concerns and area senior centers.

"The Spokane Regional Health District will work to make accommodations for our four staff. We will have a responsibility in the transition of services, so clients

will continue to be served meals through the end of the year," Lynne said.

Nick said, "Valley MOW's bid responded to ALTCEW's criteria for service delivery and budget."

Valley MOW also plans to extend Meals on Wheels and senior lunch programs to Fairfield, Rockford and Latah, in southern Spokane County, and to the East Valley, areas that have not previously had services.

"We will look for gaps in service in the whole county," Pam said.

For information, call Pam at 924-6976 or Nick at 458-2509.

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Mid-City Concerns/Meals on Wheels plans to rely more on donations

The State of Washington has cut six percent of funding for Meals on Wheels in Spokane County—about \$25,000, said Mollie Dalpae, director of Mid-City Concerns/Meals on Wheels in Spokane.

“We have been told to brace for more cuts, so we have decided to expand our fund raising efforts through mailings and Valentine’s Day Cinn-a-Grams,” she said.

“It’s heart wrenching that someone who commits a crime and goes to prison has three meals a day, while someone who has worked hard all his or her life, and maybe also served in the military has only one meal and may face having that cut,” she said.

“Our goal is that by 2015, we will not have to depend on the ebb and flow of state funding,” Mollie said. “It will be an adjustment, because it’s a chunk of money.”

In November, the state said Meals on Wheels had reached its allotment of meals and would be on its own the rest of the year.

“No one can run a good business with that uncertainty,” she said.

Mid-City Concerns/Meals on Wheels delivers a hot meal a day, Mondays through Fridays and frozen meals for the weekend to 230 to 270 people.

From a recent survey of meal recipients, they learned that 76 percent live alone, 44 percent have income of less than \$1,000 a month, 78 percent have two or fewer meals a day, 54 percent rarely eat with someone else and 43 percent are over 80 years old.

Volunteers who deliver the food each day talk with each person for a few minutes and are attentive to their needs, also delivering birthday, Valentine, Christmas and other cards, blankets for the winter and fans for the summer.

“We provide a moment of grace for people who are otherwise isolated,” Mollie said. “Some send cards to the volunteers to express their gratitude.”

Volunteers also provide safety checks, as well as emotional and social support.

Some businesses allow staff to go out and deliver meals.



Fifth-sixth grade teacher Mark Smith takes children from Discovery School to deliver meals.

Photo by Lorna Kropp - The Fig Tree

About 30 churches recruit volunteers to deliver meals on a rotation basis one to two days a month. Two volunteers do each route. One drives and the other takes the food to the door.

Volunteers come to pick up the meals between 10:45 and 11 a.m. at the Downtown Senior Center, 1222 W. Second. Meals on Wheels delivers to Avista for employees to deliver and to a North Central Spokane church. Volunteers come there to pick up for routes in East and North Spokane.

Volunteers also deliver meals on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

More than 750 volunteers are in the network.

Sixty seniors come to the Downtown Senior Center for lunch Mondays through Fridays, Thanksgiving and Christmas. Those who go there are 24 percent homeless and 99 percent below the poverty line.

That senior center and 11 other centers in the program face cuts.

The centers served more than 24,000 meals for the year ending in July.

From her youth, Mollie helped care for seniors. Her grandmother would visit friends and neighbors, and invite them to her house.

“I was always around seniors,

so when I decided to study sociology and learned I could study gerontology as part of that field, I did that,” she said.

Many seniors are isolated and lonely because they have outlived spouses and children, and because neighbors have moved, she said. Most are determined to stay in their own homes.

Mollie explained that their decision to stay at home saves the state money.

“One month of Meals on Wheels meals costs the same as half a day in a nursing home,” she said. “When the state cuts funds for meals, it loses more in the long run.”

Mollie is in the senior center each day and does a route every week.

“In earlier times, we knew our neighbors and were interdependent,” she said. “We did not have cars and TVs which keep us apart. We visited neighbors, rather than watching TV or listening to the radio. The sense of isolation increases as neighborhoods that people moved into 30 to 40 years ago deteriorate.

“Many fear falling because they

do not see well, but know there are cracks in the sidewalks,” she said. “So they stay in. There are also few neighborhood stores.”

Volunteers know the people they visit, because the same volunteers deliver meals to the same people. That way, they will notice a change in just a few minutes of visiting. The routes are small, serving just eight to 11 people, to facilitate visiting and completing the route in an hour.

“Some have volunteered for years,” she said. “Some who once delivered meals go to the senior centers or receive Meals on Wheels now.”

The Mid-City Senior Center in Spokane opened in 1963, and Meals on Wheels began in 1967.

The Regional Health District has administered the program on contract with Aging and Long Term Care of Eastern Washington. Several downtown Spokane churches started the programs, which operated out of Central United Methodist Church for many years.

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Book Parlor provides a gathering place for neighborhood and county officials

Continued from page 1
attends Salem Lutheran.

Active in regional American Baptist camp ministries at Ross Point Camp and other camps in Utah, Montana, Oregon, Idaho and Washington, he became interested in the business aspect of camp ministries—generating income to keep the summer youth camps viable by opening the camps for other groups. He applies this business-ministry sense at the Book Parlor.

"It's intriguing to find ways to use business to support our mission," he said. "It's easy to focus on business, but if we focus on it too much, what's the point? Our purpose is ministry. Similarly, if we focus on the mission and neglect business, our doors won't stay open," he said. "It's a challenge to keep perspective."

The Book Parlor is a ministry of Salem Lutheran, a partner in Spokane Urban Ministries with All Saints Lutheran—the former Emmanuel, Grace and St. Paul Lutheran churches. All Saints is paying the lease until mid-2011.

Salem donated the land. Spokane Urban Ministries built the projects, breaking ground on Walnut Corners in July 2008. The churches donated funds and, in September 2008, the economy and bank loan fell apart, so the state stepped up with a short-term loan, Casey said.

"It took miracles for this to come about," he commented. "No banks were lending and we had to finish it in a year."

In September 2009, The Book Parlor moved into Walnut Corners, sharing the retail space with Indaba Coffee. "Indaba" in Zulu means "gathering," particularly for discussing politics.

Many who come are from nearby businesses and the County Courthouse down the street.

The shift from a house to a retail space close to the sidewalk has

brought more walk-ins from the neighborhood. However, fewer people just released from jail stop in, because it's a more "public" space than the house.

"We have a space for neighbors to meet neighbors," Casey said. "Some just need an ear, because there are few public spaces in West Central Spokane."

"People who would not come to church come here," he said. "People see us as part of the neighborhood."

"Hospitality can be inconvenient for business, but our ministry is to create space for hospitality and community," he said.

The Book Parlor, Indaba Coffee and Katie's Table, which had sandwiches and groceries, started as "The Commons." Indaba now makes and sells sandwiches.

When book business is slow and food business is busy, Casey, who has a food handler's permit, can help Indaba.

Bobby Enslow, co-owner of Indaba, has lived on tips and no salary to make the venture work through the tough economy.

His pastor at The Porch, Dave Wilkinson, comes every day, along with Moody Bible College students who work at Christ the Redeemer Church. Youth for Christ and Spokane Urban Ministries meet there.

As an example of the spirit of ministry, Casey told of a man coming in near closing. Business was slow, so Casey struck up a conversation with him and learned he had a head trauma injury from service in Afghanistan. Listening led to conversing about faith.

"People often tell of faith struggles," said Casey, who stayed half an hour after closing to talk. "This is a place of presence. We need to be there to let people unload."

The ministry also includes speakers, events, discussion groups and book clubs. The Book Parlor is gearing up to have

monthly events and educational programs in 2011.

Wednesday evenings since Oct. 27, there has been a contemplative service, "Open Table," led by Liv Larson Andrews, associate pastor at Salem. She will become pastor after Tom Soeldner retires at the end of the year. About 15 people come at 5:15 p.m. for meditation and Eucharist at 6 p.m.

"Open Table gathers people's hurts and hopes together in the presence of Jesus with silence, song, prayer, bread and wine," Casey said.

Salem Lutheran's Walk and Pray group gathers at 9 a.m., Mondays at The Book Parlor to go out through the neighborhood.

"They see needs the church would not see if they stayed inside the church walls," he said.

To help people serve neighbors, a drop box sits by the door for people to drop donations to Our Place Community Ministries nearby.

As part of community building for the ministry team, staff meet every week to pray, read Scripture and talk about faith needs for themselves and the community.

Lolita Javier works 30 hours a week at The Book Parlor. Former managers Cheri Nelson and Connie Copeland Malone who fill in are also part of the team.

"I have learned how to live my faith, not just live it for me personally but live it by contributing to the neighborhood," Casey said.

The Book Parlor also has Christian supplies, candles and communion cups for sale and can order other church-related items, including curricula. The religious books are ecumenical and interfaith, offering many perspectives.

The West Central Community's Project Hope sells its T-shirts for Jobs Not Jails. Project Hope's community gardens, Vinegar Flats Garden, The Porch's garden, New Leaf Bakery and a few other vendors offered a weekly farmer's market in the parking lot of Christ the Redeemer across the street during the summer.


Another service is free Wi-Fi and a community computer where people can check emails.

For information, call 328-6527 or email lutheranbooks@msn.com or info@thebookparlor.com.



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German carol service set for Dec. 19

The German-American Society will present their annual Christmas service at 3 p.m., Sunday, Dec. 19, at St. Mark's Lutheran Church, 24th and Grand in Spokane.

The Rev. Eric Dull of St. Mark's and the Rev. James Stern of Zion Lutheran in Davenport will officiate. The Concordia Choir will perform traditional Christmas carols in German.

The service is in German and English. After the service, the German-American Society will host refreshments at the Deutsches Haus, E. 2nd and Division.

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Whitworth senior educates other students about human trafficking

Since Angie Hartley, a senior at Whitworth University, learned about human trafficking two years ago when she was training to volunteer at a Cup of Cool Water, she became concerned enough to work with Whitworth's International Justice Mission Club to organize educational events to raise awareness on campus.

"I didn't realize there was human trafficking in the United States, and even in Spokane," she said. "I discovered that youth downtown might be affected by sex trafficking and be forced into prostitution."

Angie learned that trafficking is a big industry in many areas. She became convinced that people need to know what is going on.

As president of the International Justice Mission Club on campus, she wanted to see that something happened.

Growing up in the 3,000-member Bethel Church in Richland, she became interested in social justice problems as she participated in the 200-member youth group.

In high school, she organized a 30-hour Famine, a World Vision event, and went on several mission trips in the area, plus two weeks for two summers in Helene, an island off Honduras, helping third graders in a school at a mission connected with a clinic.

A major in international studies and Spanish, Angie also studied last spring in Spain as part of an academic and cultural exchange program.

"I learned from these experiences that faith is not just words, nor is it just actions," she remarked. "It's a combination of both."

Her interest continued to grow last year when she took a "Gender, Politics and Law" class with Julia Stronks, looking at the importance of gender in society and ways women are oppressed, including by trafficking of women.

Angie, who attends Vintage Faith Community in Spokane, believes that "we are responsible to look after people who do not have rights. A big part of faith is social responsibility. Churches should be concerned about people brushed aside, ignored and oppressed by society."

The International Justice Mission Club (IJM), which is a chapter of the national club, (ijm.org) organized a week of educational events for students in November to stir their interest in working with one of five organizations in Spokane that addresses human trafficking.

IJM started when U.S. lawyers went abroad to win freedom for people and found human traffick-



Angie Hartley organizes education on human trafficking.

ing was part of a larger system of gender violence, labor and sex trafficking.

Every year the club decides on a priority issue.

This year they partnered with Women in Society Everywhere (WISE) and other clubs, to talk about women's roles in society, oppression and domestic violence.

Angie has been involved in the club for a year and a half. They show movies on campus, discuss gender violence and raise funds.

For some students attending the events, it was the first time that they heard that human trafficking exists in Spokane. They were curious and interested in the issue, said Angie.

Tuesday, Nov. 16, students joined in a class on "The Slavery Map," an interactive map of the world with pins on different cities and a brief description of a case of slavery and an action taken to free the people.

Another Tuesday class on "The Supply Chain" informed students about what companies use slave labor. The goal was to help students make decisions about what products they want to buy as consumers, so they can avoid

things made by slave labor.

"Knowing who makes what can help reduce our role in supporting the slave trade in sweatshops," she said. "Knowing which companies use slave labor, we can make our voice heard and can have an effect on their business."

On Wednesday, there was a class for business leaders to learn how they could recognize and address forced labor.

Not-for-Sale presented both international and local trafficking issues. More than 250 attended their Stop Paying for Slavery presentation.

They emphasized the idea that anybody can and should be involved in the fight against human trafficking, giving examples of ways that students can buy or not buy certain products, and can encourage their friends and family to learn more and raise money.

On Thursday, Nov. 18, students participated in "Breaking the Chain," taking out a link in a large

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chain when they signed up to do something.

Some wrote letters to corporations that continue to use slave labor at some point in their production.

"The letters warned corporations that if they continued to choose not to change their practices, we would choose to stop buying their products," she said. "Students also spoke with World Relief representatives and 13 people signed up to volunteer with World Relief's anti-trafficking program.

"Overall it was a successful week," Angie reported, "and I think many people learned for the first time that slavery still exists, and felt the need to be involved to fight against this crime.

"The event was empowering and left students with the idea that there is hope in the fight against

trafficking, but it will take the collaboration of all people to end the issue," Angie said.

After graduating in May, 2011, she plans to do a one- or two-year interim program before going to graduate school to focus on international development. She is applying for programs teaching English or doing community service abroad.

She started at Whitworth as a major in international business, but found the courses in comparative politics and culture more interesting than the business classes.

"I had had the naïve perspective that we could help by donating money and feeding the world," Angie said. "I realize that the issues are multifaceted."

For information, call 509-438-6997 or email ahartley11@my.whitworth.edu.

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Second Harvest survey finds education level of food bank clients is on the rise

Second Harvest of the Inland Northwest's 24th annual client survey of 689 men and women using its 20 Spokane County food pantries reveals similar statistics to previous years, except that clients are increasingly educated, said Rod Wieber, director of development.

Nearly 10 percent have bachelor's degrees or higher, more than five percent graduated from a business, trade or technical school, and 35 percent have earned a two-year degree or have taken some college courses.

"We have had many new clients who have not used food banks before. They are coming because they were laid off or work fewer hours."

A common thread with previous years is that the majority of clients eat fewer fruits and vegetables than recommended, and 42 percent of clients eat one or no fruits or vegetables each day.

Many have health conditions: 15 percent diabetic, 14 percent high blood pressure and 11 percent high cholesterol. Nearly

70 percent have unpaid medical bills.

Because of the desire to provide more produce, about 60 percent of the food provided last year was perishable—more produce from growers and the agriculture industry, plus more frozen food.

About 34 percent are children under 18.

In contrast to when Rod started working for Second Harvest four years ago—when 11 percent of their clients were seniors—6 percent are now seniors.

"We continue to see unprecedented need for meals and food centers," he continued. The Medical Lake food bank director said that in August 2009, they served 90 families, but served 170 families in August 2010.

"We continue to hear of growing numbers using food banks in our service area," he said. "We did 117 mobile food bank distributions from July 2009 to June 2010, and expect this year to do 200."

Last year, Second Harvest distributed 19.7 million pounds

of food, and Rod anticipated it will distribute 21 million pounds this year.

"On target to do more, we hope donations will continue as anticipated," he said. "The community has been supportive, so we have been able to meet needs through food drives, donations and volunteers, as well as food producers and businesses.

Volunteers come Monday and Wednesday evenings for Help the Hungry nights, boxing onions, potatoes and carrots, or filling backpacks with food for school children from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

About 38 percent of households needing food assistance have one or more family members working full or part time.

Of those using the food banks, 23 percent said they were temporarily unemployed, 11 percent said they work low-wage jobs and 20 percent said their fixed incomes are too small to cover their living expenses. About 72 percent live below the federal poverty level.

For information, call 534-6678.

Recipients in remote areas may receive vouchers or monthly case of frozen meals

As the state and federal governments ask everyone to tighten their belts, Anita Sailor, senior nutrition program manager for Rural Resources in Colville, said those cuts include seniors and affect donations, so "programs are stretched to the hilt."

"There's only so much we can cut with Meals on Wheels without affecting the number and type of meals we serve," she said.

For example, frozen meals cost less than hot meals.

"We're always trying to raise funds and find more money, but communities only have so much, and every nonprofit is in the same boat—Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and food banks," Anita said. "We're determined to serve those in the most critical need, asking seniors who receive the meals to donate a bit more."

The Tri-County program asks for \$3 for hot meals, but the average donation is half that.

Meals on Wheels through Rural Resources serves the Tri-counties—Stevens, Ferry and Pend Oreille. Because communities are far apart, the program provides hot meals, liquid meals, frozen meals and shelf-stable meals.

"Logistically, we can't deliver hot meals in all locations. For example, volunteers can't drive up

a mountain if the road isn't passable. So we offer frozen meals and deliver a case once a month based on needs, issues and access," said Anita, who has worked with the program for 15 years.

About 100 volunteers assist. Churches and service groups help coordinate the volunteers.

As of the end of September 2010, Rural Resources had served 24,000 meals and has some people on waiting lists, especially for hot meals and the main "congregate meal site" or senior lunch site.

Rural Resources, which has helped Northeast Washington residents since 1965, sends vouchers to some of the seniors. The vouchers can be used for meals at 15 to 18 locations—including hospitals and restaurants.

"They can use vouchers as fast or slow as they want," she said.

Federal funds for the senior lunch program have been cut \$10,000, which Anita said is a big amount for a small program.

"It's a big deal to our budget. Everything is stretched to the max, and there is more need, especially in the winter when seniors are less able to go out," she said. "Plus there are more people in their 50s and 60s who need meal help. They have to go to the food bank."

Rural Resources has no income limits for Meals on Wheels or the senior meal sites. Age is the criterion, because even seniors with money need good nutrition.

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Young woman's 'gap year' before college begins at Idaho monastery

Looking for a place to find balance to begin her "gap year" between high school and entering Yale University, Kelly Schumann left the busy, achievement-oriented metropolitan life of Washington, D.C., to spend six weeks this fall at the Monastery of St. Gertrude's in Cottonwood, Idaho.

While peers moved into dorm rooms and shopped for textbooks, she sat in prayer with the Benedictine sisters. Instead of pushing through crowds of students to go to class, she walked in the monastery forest or admired sunrise colors over the Camas Prairie, said Theresa Henson, communications manager at St. Gertrude's.

Kelly delayed her admission to Yale for a break from academia and an opportunity for new experiences. She joined in monastic life. Next she will volunteer at an eco-resort on the big island of Hawaii, and in January begins five months of teaching English at a girls' college and vocational school in Rwanda.

Yale encourages students to take a gap year, but she wasn't going to take one until a February blizzard in her senior year reminded her what free time felt like, and she decided to delay college.

"Suddenly I felt so peaceful,"



Kelly Schumann and Benedictine Sister Teresa Jackson
Courtesy of the Monastery of St. Gertrude

said Kelly, who is funding her travel with savings from her work as a professional harpist.

"I wanted to go where that balance was important, because, well, I needed it," said Kelly of seeking a place "where the values would help me reset my life. It was a good fit. I felt at home."

Her grandfather, who went to seminary before he met her grandmother, suggested that a Benedictine monastery would be a good place to find balance.

At St. Gertrude's she found simplicity in action, quite a con-

trast to Washington, D.C., where simplicity has little value.

"The Benedictine sisters at St. Gertrude's make ancient traditions apply to today's society," Kelly said. "Seeing the women on the street, they do not look like sisters, but they are spiritually dedicated to live the traditional values of simplicity, faith and prayer. They keep the integrity of their ancient vows and translate them so they are relevant."

Although she was active in a parish, Kelly said she had not had much exposure to the life of

women religious because she attended public school.

With women two, three and even four times her age, she joined in the daily life of prayer three times a day, three meals together, soap-making and gardening, finding Benedictine ideas of balance—"more important lessons than tests and essays."

"Spending six weeks placing God at the center of everything was powerful," Kelly said, noting the contrast with everyday lives of people in school, in jobs or at homes where trivial things take over and dominate.

She found the monastery's location conducive to including God in everyday life.

"The simplicity is counter-cultural in a society dominated by materialism," she said after returning to her home in D.C. "Back in my big bedroom, I wonder what to do with all the stuff I have. The values at the monastery were alternatives to stuff, money and power. It's another way to live."

While there, Kelly produced a

video that will be available in a few months on the monastery's website and YouTube. She tracked and photographed the daily lives of the sisters praying, working and relaxing.

The video conveys the monastery's culture and values, noted Theresa.

Before Kelly left, the community sang a blessing to her and Kelly wrote a three-page goodbye letter, recounting her experiences and lessons she learned.

She concluded with her own blessing: "May this jewel of a place never lose its luster; may the radiant gleam of these people never fade. May the sun and the stars continue to shine down on this incredible place. Thank you, Monastery of St. Gertrude, for showing me a little bit of heaven."

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Student inspires monastery to develop summer immersion

Kelly Schumann's presence at the Monastery of St. Gertrude inspired Sister Teresa Jackson, volunteer coordinator and vocations director, to develop her vision for St. Gertrude's and schedule an eight-week—June 15 to Aug. 10, 2011—summer monastic immersion experience and internship for five women aged 18 to 60.

Like Kelly, they would experience daily monastic life and share in the sisters' work, including working with the retreat ministry, marketing and communication, soap making, gardening, the museum and gift store.

In Sister Teresa's 13 years at the monastery, volunteers have come weekends to two weeks to experience monastic life or to help with a project.

"Most are middle-aged, but Kelly's stay gave the sisters a chance to see how an 18-year-old would experience monastery life," said Sister Teresa, who entered the monastery when she was 35 and made her profession in 2003.

The community has 57 sisters, 45 of whom live at the monastery. Others minister and live in Idaho,

Washington, Minnesota and California as a college professor, a second grade teacher, a teacher at a charter school for gangs, nurses, hospital chaplains, pastoral associates and social workers.

"We live together as a committed community, transformed by and rooted in God, out of which we go out to the world to do different types of ministries and to manifest God's power," she said.

The sisters at the monastery provide hospitality for group and individual retreats, run the bed and breakfast they opened in the summer, raise much of their own food, make natural products and run a museum of the history of North Central Idaho.

Their ministries include healing, hospitality, peace and justice, prayer, spirituality, stewardship and monastery industries.

Sister Teresa said Benedictines are the oldest religious order in the Western world, founded in the 6th century. They have been around for more than 1,500 years.

Each monastery is autonomous, but they have a loose federation for mutual support and account-

ability. There are more than 100 monasteries for men and women in the United States.

Sister Teresa, who was not raised in a faith, grew up in the San Francisco area and became an American Baptist in college. She practiced law and worked in social services before she became Catholic and decided to enter a Benedictine monastery.

After "falling in love with the community" on a week-long visit there, she spent two years discerning before entering formation.

"I felt called to be here, to follow the Benedictine monastic tradition, rooted in living with a group of people on a journey together seeking God day after day, year after year," she said.

Sister Teresa said she has become a person living for others.

While simplicity is part of community life, she said "we have computers, cars and middle-class conveniences, but we live in a way that is different from the predominant culture."

For information, call 208-962-3224 or email volunteer@stgertrudes.org.



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'Tis the season for Scrooges to join the wise ones, who visit a poor baby

For the season of cold weather and warm hearts, yes, even some Scrooges seem to "get it." We're seeing the resilience, persistence and resourcefulness of the area's many agencies providing warmth, housing, food, caring, hospitality, challenges and listening ears to increasing numbers of people struggling in this economy.

In news, proposed political solutions seem to spiral away from faithful responses that are so logical and simple, but one politician said, "In these times, we need to take care of each other." A Congresswoman also offered some logical options to recycled ideas of cutting services to, opportunities for and entitlement programs for the vulnerable, including the middle class.

The hot potato is recognizing that more wealth—one quarter—is lodged and stuck in the pockets of one percent of the people, who still don't seem ready or willing to join in the sacrifice the rest of the nation is

experiencing willingly or unwillingly.

Imagine, more people who have lost jobs and can't find work are volunteering to care for neighbors!

Imagine, people in ministries and non-profits are out of work because of funding cuts. As they join in lines for turkeys and toys with people they once served former co-workers have to do more.

Imagine, many newly poor are educated and know they are not alone in their pain. They won't just cry and wail in grief over their individual loss. They will speak out. They *will* be heard!

Imagine, anxiety spreads in families as loved ones live on the edge because the government assistance just isn't enough—and never was. Families stretch to share their wealth, to listen, pained to live far apart or welcoming family members back.

Ah, a Baby was born to bring peace and justice. Ah, a Prophet announced that his

ministry is to bring good news to the poor and recovery of sight to those blinded by their comfort and overabundance. When he spoke the painful truth, he was not received with popularity but did not worry about what people thought of him.

Ecumenical and interfaith efforts are stirring awareness in faith communities around the globe, among the nations' policy makers and through the gleaming skyscrapers. The call to justice is in all of our scriptures.

"Words of hope and joy seem inadequate in these worst of times," said my pastor, Joan Sulser in a recent sermon at Cheney United Church of Christ. She reminded us that Israel also experienced "the worst of times" many times. As we note that these times are bad, we remember that so was the Depression, World War II, the Cold War, the Civil Rights struggle, the Vietnam War, burning cities and other recessions.

It's no excuse for today's unbalanced suf-

fering and sacrifice at the hands of those in power who want to remain in power.

What will awaken us to act, to rise from our TVs, cell phones and pews? When will too much be too much? How will we find our voices? When will this era stir enough people to nonviolent disobedience? When will we recognize we have lost our freedom by fighting terrorism? When will we stop thinking "might makes right" and stop pouring our wealth into killing people?

Jesus' birth into poverty—announced to shepherds and drawing attention of *wise* folk—is a story we repeat each year, often without understanding in the midst of our holiday holy days of shopping frenzies.

There is hope, because God is with us, we are with God and each other. The stories of hope, peace, goodwill and challenge, invite us, to "fear not," put our faith into action and donate what we can.

Mary Stamp - Editor

Kindergarten behavior lessons offer response for national economic woes

Being kind, fair and responsible are three of the ongoing lessons at the school where my grandson is a kindergartner. The list and its definitions are posted on his reading wall at home as a reminder.

Could we add that to our national agenda? There isn't an area in our life together that couldn't be more felicitous if those qualities were running as background programs.

It's easy to feel that, as a nation, we have too many problems to solve: unemployment, lack of economic growth, governmental stalemate, state and local budget crises, too many failing schools, high dropout rates, an intimidating federal deficit, a deteriorating social safety net, two wars entered without exit plans, toxic verbal exchanges in place of reasoned discussion, widespread fear and distrust.

Faced with complexity, we look for simplicity and, often, someone to blame,

but our present economic situation and the social upheaval that has come with it are not going to yield to simplistic thinking. Most problems are interlocking. A solution in one area may have unintended consequences in another.

We seem near consensus that our educational system needs work. Dropout rates are high. Support services are low. As more people lose their jobs, tax revenue drops, budgets tighten, classes in non-required subjects are dropped, teachers are cut, classes are larger, and teachers are less able to give individual attention.

Reorganizing to use the growing body of research on best practices requires spending to train teachers and provide materials. We're back to vanishing tax revenue.

Schools don't operate in isolation. After school or after dinner, many children head for the public library. Many school librar-

ies have been cut to a few days a week or eliminated, and the public library system is having problems. Library boards are tightening budgets through a combination of cutting staff, programs, service hours or branches. Evenings and Saturdays often go first. Branches are eliminated in the areas with the least political clout—the poorest.

In Spokane, the amount to keep a branch open is almost the same as a pay raise for library staff. The "solution" is just a one-year fix for an ongoing problem.

As a retired reference librarian whose family came from lower rungs of the economic ladder, I could go into a hymn of praise about delights of discovering libraries when I was in grade school and opportunities that opened for me. I could rant about the shortsightedness of depriving anyone of the wealth of resources and the personal mentoring delivered economically

by community libraries.

A circle of inter-relatedness shows up in many areas. As more people are forced into poverty, they must navigate the social service system, which has problems, too.

Because of state budget shortfalls in Oregon and Washington, state employees are taking one-day, unpaid furloughs each month. Services suffer. The measure saves jobs and seems fair, because each contributes a day's pay per month, but it is particularly hard on people with lower incomes. It also means less money flows into the economy. So what can we do?

We can do what we *can* do for the greater good in our own families, neighborhoods and organizations. We can set a good example by being kind, fair and responsible and we can insist our leaders listen to where we really want to be led.

Nancy Minard - editorial team

Letter to the Editor

Sounding Board

Newsletter Excerpts

At Country Homes Christian Church we seek to continue the ministry, which Jesus began, living out the values he embodied. Part of what that means is noticing and appreciating when others embody those values as well.

We see the work The Fig Tree is doing to bring together the faith community in our region, and we extend to you our deep gratitude and appreciation.

Thank you for being one of our partners in ministry here in Spokane. May God continue to shine in you and through you as you touch the lives of those you serve.

**The Rev. Roger Lynn
Country Homes Christian Church**

A chosen people. A special people. A journeying people.

Have we thought of ourselves in these terms? If not, it's time to take this seriously! The truth is that God is going to "read" us into the same story this Advent and invite us to become chosen, to be "special," and "to discover again and again" what God wants us to be doing in the world. This is what it means to be a Christian today, a follower of Jesus!

The catch, of course, is in the last phrase, "a journeying people." Here the story of Mary and Joseph is instructive.

Is it a surprise that Jesus arrived while the two were traveling, vulnerable and away from home? Is it a surprise that we will read later that Jesus was driven into the desert following his baptism or that he would always be moving between Jerusalem and Galilee? The truth is that God's people are always people on the move and the challenges to faithfulness come most often in the context of landedness. We don't want to be "un-settled!"

Here's the challenge for the year to come: How will we move into life following Jesus and his Way, and avoid the temptation to put down roots, seeking a false security in predictability? How will we be people of "the way" when everything else tries to scare us into believing we should dig in and fight for the security of our place? Travel mercies!

**Bishop Martin Wells - Eastern
Washington Idaho Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

In America, we're not adept with "king" language. Not surprising really, if we consider that we fought a war against our "parent" country—and among ourselves—in part to stop being subjects of and subject to a distant and elevated figurehead. Our national identity and culture were formed out of a rejection of monarchy and non-representative government. Translation: We can govern our own selves.

This fierce individualism and independence conflates and institutionalizes a basic human tendency, exemplified by my son when he was three: You're not the boss of me! As a matter of fact, I was his boss—though often he and I did not share that reality. Similarly, few of us live in the reality of our relationship to God: God is the boss of us.

What would it look like if we *got* this?

Perhaps we would act more like Jesus, healing the sick, reconciling the exiled, and teaching about the Kingdom. Maybe we'd engage in a more starkly political agenda by shaking a system of dominance and lifting the lowly. Maybe being subject to Christ means a total submission to God's will. We can probably come up with a half-dozen more pictures of what it might look like to

acknowledge Christ as King in our lives.

However, our imaginations fail us, because we tend to turn Christ into a set of ideals, behaviors or ethics, or we institutionalize him in a thing called "church." Then we allow these ideals, behaviors, ethics or institutions to rule us instead of reserving room in our hearts for Christ alone.

Like much in our Gospel, Christ the King has a lot to do with role clarification and identity. Christ is King; I'm not. Nor are the theologies, ecclesiologies or ethical systems that too often stand in for the real deal: the gift and mystery of God incarnate.

Like most identity shifts, understanding Christ as King requires a heart change as well as a behavioral change. It's not a one shot deal. It's a daily turning back toward God, a moment-by-moment redirection of our wills toward right relationship with Christ who makes us whole.

**Kris Christensen - missionary
Holy Trinity Episcopal**

Several issues emerge from two recent conversations. One was with an engineer friend retiring early from a large company, where he loyally worked for his whole career. The second was with a young aerospace engineer who was not intending to stay with the same company or field.

The first issue is how the working and professional world has changed. The secular business world has forced companies and corporations to change their cultures. It has become a cutthroat environment, and to survive, companies have to do more with less and drive their employees to produce. Now, instead of a workplace being relaxed, it is a stress filled place where everyone must produce more and more.

The mainline church faces a similar

environmental change. We have moved to a post-organized religious culture. The general public is not looking for a church to affiliate with. To survive, the church is competing harder and harder, not necessarily with just other churches, but with nonprofits and recreational organizations.

My second observation reflects the generational difference between two bright and talented professionals in the same field. They have totally different working styles and philosophies. The implications for our church are manifold. The heart and soul of our United Methodist Church has been the G.I. generation and their children. They have given their lives to build our churches, and their loyalty is unsurpassed.

However, as our church ages, we no longer have that ingrained loyalty with newer generations. The Post Modern generations will not affiliate with a church forever, and they usually do not have a brand loyalty.

All of us have to adapt to the social changes we have witnessed. We have to work harder to maintain our churches. All of us are going through tremendous changes both externally and internally.

However, the one constant for us in the church is our faith in Jesus Christ. The business world does not have a moral compass as we have, and that is the very reason why the society and world need us so much. Our bottom line is not more profits for our shareholders, but the very transformation of individual lives that leads to the transformation of our whole world.

So, Church: Hold fast to our faith. Experiment with new ways of reaching out to new people. Feed the sheep! Be the Hope,

**Bishop Grant Hagiya
Pacific Northwest Conference of the
United Methodist Church**

Catholic Charities collects year's funds in December

With city, state and federal funding dropping for programs serving the poor, Catholic Charities has reduced its staff and readjusted its budget while needs of people have grown consistently over the past three years, said Rob McCann, executive director of Catholic Charities Spokane.

"State cuts are huge," he said "Senior services will be reduced. Cuts in basic health will affect all the families we serve. We realized two years ago we needed to plan with substantive cuts in mind. We budgeted with the worst case in mind."

Added to that, Rob said, annual donations have been down for three years, as for many nonprofits. To live within the budget, Catholic Charities has had to lay off some staff, cutting 21 positions in 2010. In 2011, they plan some reduced hours, but no layoffs.

Meanwhile, Rob said, "needs have gone through the roof for services in all programs, but we have kept our programs open."

"We are serving the same number of people with fewer people to do the same amount of work or more," Rob said.

With more pressure on the staff, he is concerned about burnout and compassion fatigue as staff responds to "the immense suffering of people we serve every day."

Program directors watch for signs of stress and support staff, encouraging their sense of being servant leaders.

While needs and shortages seem insurmountable, they have been accompanied by an increase in volunteers. Many people who are out of work and looking for something to do and many former donors who can no longer give as much are offering their time.

Rob estimates a 10 to 20 percent increase in the number of volunteers. About 5,200 now serve in Catholic Charities' programs in 13 Eastern Washington counties.

In December, Catholic Charities and Volunteers of America serve 30,000 people at the Fairgrounds, providing toys, clothes, food and gifts at the annual Spokesman-Review Christmas Bureau.

Catholic Charities also raises all its funds for its 2011 programs in its annual month-long Christmas Collection. A Candlelight Vigil on Nov. 22 launched the collection and raised awareness about effects of poverty and homelessness on the community. Supporters, staff, board, volunteers and clients walked around the block,

singing carols and praying.

"We continue to see tremendous new struggles for the poor as they seek work, stability for their children, and simply try to survive. Many social service agencies have lost large amounts of public funding, and private donations have declined as well," Rob said, urging support of the programs serving 67,000 people.

"Several years ago when the state was \$8 billion in the hole, we realized we needed to be less dependent on government funding," he said.

Scott Cooper, director of Parish Social Ministries with Catholic Charities, pointed to another anticipated cut.

As a primary childcare provider at St. Anne's Children's and Family Center, he said, Catholic Charities is concerned about the state cutting child care subsidy by lowering the qualifier from

200 percent of the federal poverty level to 175 percent.

"That will leave many families without the ability to have child care while the parents are working," Scott said.

St. Anne's Children's and Family Center serves about 65 households through the Department of Social and Health Services' Working Connections program.

Scott said that these are families who have gone through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families and are working. The childcare supports their transition from welfare to work.

The center dedicates a third of its slots for Working Connections families. The other two-thirds of households pay the market rate, helping offset the Working Connections slots, he said.

For information, call 458-4250 or email rmccann@ccspokane.org.

Calendar of Events

- To Dec 11** • **Christmas Tree Elegance**, Spokane Symphony Associates, Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post St., 458-8733
- To Dec 12** • **Tree of Sharing**, Riverpark Square, Northtown and Valley malls, 624-1366
- Dec 2-6** • **Nativitys from around the World**, South Stake Center, 1620 E 29th, Thursday, Friday and Monday 3 to 9 p.m., Saturday & Sunday noon to 9 p.m., 448-2247
- Dec 4** • **Holiday Home Tour**, Spokane Preservation Advocates, Browne's Addition, noon to 4 p.m., 546-3828
- Dec 5** • **"HeartSongs" Concert**, The Voiceless Choir, Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 6:30 p.m., 448-1311
- Dec 7** • **Book Release Party** for *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, The Book Parlor, 1425 W. Broadway, 5:30 p.m., 328-6527
- Dec 8** • **Spokane Hispanic Business Professional Assn**, Agave Latin Bistro, 830 W. Sprague Ave., 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., mikeg@kxly.com
- Dec 10** • **Get Connected Student of Color Day**, Spokane Community College Lair, 1810 N. Green St., 9 a.m. to 2 p.m., 533-3219
- **"Why Are Human Rights Important to Me** in North Idaho," Human Rights Education Institute Breakfast, 414 1/2 Mullan, Coeur d'Alene, 8 a.m., 208-292-2359
- Dec 10 & 11** • **Whitworth University Christmas Festival Concert**, First Presbyterian, 318 S. Cedar, Friday 8 p.m., Saturday 3 and 7 p.m., 777-3280
- Dec 11** • **St. Lucy's Candlelight Breakfast**, Shalom Ministries, Cathedral of St. John, 127 E. 12th Ave, 7:30 a.m., 455-9019
- **Spokane Christmas Lights Walk**, Friends Church, 1612 W. Dalke Ave., 5 to 10 p.m., 326-3575
- Dec 12** • **Christ Kitchen Gingerbread Build-Off**, Davenport Hotel, 10 S. Post, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., 954-0554
- **Human Rights Day**, All Saints Lutheran Church, 314 S. Spruce St., 2 p.m., 838-7870
- Dec 15 & 16** • **"Christmas Presence,"** Singing Nuns, Bing Crosby Theatre, 901 W. Sprague, 2 and 7:30 p.m., 800-325-SEAT
- Dec 16** • **Celtic Solstice Celebration**, St. David's Episcopal, 7315 N. Wall, 7 p.m., 466-3100a
- Dec 31/Jan 1** • **First Night and First Day**, downtown Spokane, www.firstnightspokane.org
- To Jan 1** • **Campbell House Christmas Open House**, 2316 W. First Ave., noon to 4 p.m., 456-3931
- Jan 5** • **Fig Tree distribution**, St. Mark's Lutheran, 316 E. 24th, 9 a.m., 535-1813
- Jan 6** • **Fig Tree Board**, Emmanuel Center, 631 S. Richard Allen Ct., 1 p.m., 535-1813



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Fewer services now mean more trauma and more need for services in the future

As nonprofits absorb cuts, Adam Shipman, director of advocacy and education for Lutheran Community Services Northwest (LCSNW), calls for people of faith and all people in communities to recognize the critical value of social services to the health and wellbeing of their communities.

He said budget cuts for many nonprofit services will increase the need for crisis services by those traumatized by crime and sexual assault.

People coming now face multiple issues because of a lack of other services, Adam said.

LCSNW, as other nonprofits, has had to lay off some staff and needs more work from fewer people for less money. While that creates stress for staff and management, he said, it's needed to keep programs viable and maintain client services.

"Doing more with less in human services is less feasible than in other work," he said. "Staff need to be at their best when they respond to more demanding needs and have more clients to see.

"If children's mental health issues are not treated when they experience a trauma, they may face more difficulties, requiring more expensive services in the future," he explained.

With less federal, state and local funding, LCSNW seeks more donations but knows donors are affected by the economy and have less money to give, he said.

His glass-half-full side sees the current climate as part of a cycle that will recover. His glass-half-empty side knows the cuts may be just the tip of an iceberg of cuts in social services.

"It may get worse before it gets better," Adam said. "Human services, particularly crisis services, are important to any community. I hope the community continues to invest in a safety net."

Services at LCSNW, which was started in Spokane in 1956 to provide foster care, now

include adoption/foster care, advocacy, alcohol/drug treatment, community education, crisis intervention, disaster response, employee assistance, family support, mental health counseling, parent education, refugee resettlement, senior outreach, violence prevention and counseling, volunteer services and youth asset development.

Volunteers help with fund raising and a 24-hour crisis line.

Dennis McGaughy, executive director of LCSNW, said that 6.3 percent in state cuts now will be followed by more cuts to social services in the spring, because there are fewer sales to generate sales tax funds, the candy and bottled water tax was voted down, and the Children's Initiative was defeated.

He hopes holiday shopping will generate more sales taxes and help ease the cuts.

Aware that as they and others have had to cut some staff, Dennis, who has been with LCSNW for 20 years, said more people are slipping into poverty. He is concerned because sometimes unemployment creates problems with abuse.

"Income at our annual October luncheon was generous but down from last year, because of the recession," reported Dennis.

During the spring, he said they will focus on building support through fund raisers, grants and partnership with Catholic Charities on programs to keep overhead to a minimum. Recently LCSNW and Catholic Charities co-sponsored workshops for clergy on issues veterans face.

Federal and state dollars are 80 percent of the LCSNW budget, because "we are an important player in providing community services with minimum overhead," said Dennis.

For information, call 353-5057 or email ashipman@lcsnw.com.

Council seeks to 'Sock It to Spokane'

The Spokane Interfaith Council asks faith communities to put out collection boxes with a sign, "Sock It to Spokane," and select an agency, to which they will donate socks when the box is full.

The sign and agency list are available by emailing the council—spokaneifc@gmail.com.

The project was developed with inspiration of Friends of Compassion and the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints.

For information, call 534-1011.



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Red-kettle gifts cover needs

The Salvation Army is seeing more desperation and more families—mothers, fathers and children—in its family emergency shelter program, said Shelley Hartmann, program manager.

"More are having difficulty finding jobs before their 90 days at the shelter are up," she said.

Some will be among the 157 bell ringers who work temporarily doing that seasonal job.

The money collected by bell ringers in the red kettles outside stores in December helps fund Salvation Army programs all year, as needed, said Heather Byrd, director of development and communication.

"We are concerned how government and other cuts will affect service," said Shelley. "Other than seasonal workers at the youth center, we have not laid off staff."

For information, call 329-2761 or visit www.salvationarmyspokane.org.

Cuts leave more homeless in Idaho

Nearly 150 sleeping bags and blankets donated to warming centers in Coeur d'Alene and Post Falls during Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week in November were gone in a week, said Matt Hutchinson, social services director of St. Vincent de Paul.

"We need blankets, sleeping bags, coats, gloves and stocking hats," he said.

The centers at 117 Walnut in Coeur d'Alene and 202 W. 7th in Post Falls shelter people overnight when temperatures are below 15 degrees. In the day, homeless people sleeping there go to the library,


Fresh Start or the Help Center, which houses 15 agencies.

Cuts in Emergency Shelter Grants in favor of the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program cuts out homeless people who cannot stabilize themselves—domestic violence victims and people struggling with mental illness and addictions, he said.

St. Vincent de Paul's houses 12 in its men's shelter and 12 to 15 in its women's shelter, and turns away 10 to 20 people a week.


For information, call 208-664-3095.

One of these women is terminally ill.
The other is 84.



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